



1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut

SUMMARY: Smart Growth Project Scoring System

Smart, sustainable, responsible real estate developments must meet stringent criteria in where and how they are sited, designed and constructed. Bringing a smart, sustainable and responsible development project to fruition, given the real estate markets and general development environment in Connecticut, is often very expensive and cumbersome. 1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut lauds the efforts of developers who take on the challenge to create high quality, sensibly-priced, appropriately-sited projects in our cities and town centers. In 2008, 1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut created a Smart Growth Project Scoring System to showcase developments that meet smart growth principles. 1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut publicly endorses high scoring development, and will advocate on its behalf.

Prerequisite: To be eligible for the evaluation program, the project first must NOT be a "greenfield development" -- that is, a project to be built on undisturbed forests or grassland, or on land previously used for rural purposes only, such as cropland, pasture, wood lots, or quarries. Second, the project must NOT be on land that will not be served by sewer and water infrastructure that existed or was already approved at the time the project was initiated. If a project fails both of these tests, it is by definition not a smart growth project and will not be eligible for the program.

The scoring then evaluates the development against a series of detailed criteria which are grouped into the categories described below and assigned weighted scores. The maximum possible score is 100 points.

A. MAXIMIZE THE USE OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE. Growing smarter means that new development is located where infrastructure exists. Doing so saves taxpayer money, leverages public investment, and reduces the transportation costs of businesses and households. Steering development toward established places can help revitalize languishing neighborhoods. Growing smarter encourages development on underused land, redevelopment for derelict properties, remediated brownfield sites, and adaptation and reuse of existing structures. These measures not only strengthen existing communities, but also help care for the natural environment and preserve it for future generations. Locating a project within a metropolitan region is critical, because even projects that are designed to be compact and walkable can have unwanted impacts if the development is dependent on overburdened roads, disconnected from the transit system, or requires unnecessary destruction of irreplaceable farms or forests.

Maximize the Use of Existing Infrastructure: Scoring Criteria – 16 points
1. Site type
2. Remediation standard
3. Minimize road infrastructure
4. Reuse existing Buildings

B. TRANSPORTATION CHOICE, ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY. Growing smarter means a variety of transportation options is provided – like safe and reliable public transportation, sidewalks, bike paths and walking trails – that promotes and improves health, conserves energy and safeguards the environment. Automobile dependency can be reduced if there are other attractive and convenient ways to get a desired location. Accessibility means that residents and workers can find shops, restaurants, services and other daily needs in close proximity, or by means of transit. Connectivity means minimizing the obstacles and barriers to reaching nearby destinations by the most efficient pedestrian, bike or vehicle route. Typical barriers include overly large arterial roads that are hard to cross or streets that dead-end rather than connecting in a network. Projects should take advantage of existing or proposed transit. Or, projects should provide transit facilities that will logically extend and support the existing transit service.

Transportation Choice, Accessibility & Connectivity: Scoring Criteria – 16 points
5. Transit Availability 6. Accessibility to differing abilities 7. Traffic Calming 8. Streets safe for biking/walking

C. PROVIDE FOR A MIX OF USES. Growing smarter means creating walkable neighborhoods by mixing land uses. Building stores, offices and residences near one another allows residents to work, shop, and play close to home. Mixing land uses makes walking and cycling convenient, protects the environment by curtailing sprawl, conserves energy by reducing dependence on cars, and allows a viable scale for green technology pilot projects.

Provide for a Mix of Uses: Scoring Criteria – 12 points
9. Proximity of Uses 10. Variety of Uses 11. Jobs/Housing balance 12. Parks and Public Spaces

D. PROVIDE COMPACTNESS USE LAND EFFICIENTLY. Smart growth encourages energy efficiency and efficient use of land with higher density development and compact building patterns. Compact building patterns address the efficient use of space through the design and location of development on a given site. Measures for compact development can include building up, clustering, minimizing the coverage areas devoted to parking, and reducing setbacks or road widths. By creating a walkable environment it is possible to accomplish more with less driving; this reduces automobile dependency and thus the number of cars for which parking must be provided.

Provide Compactness/Land Use Efficiency: Scoring Criteria – 12 Points
13. Density 14. Ease of access 15 Street Network Connection

E. PROVIDING A RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS. Growing smarter means that a wide range of housing options is provided, which accommodate a wide range of household incomes. It means that affordability is protected, and that the larger community or municipality has texture, interest, and diversity.

Provide a Range of Housing Options: Scoring Criteria – 12 Points
16. Housing unit types 17. Neighborhood income diversity

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| 18. Affordability protection
19. Municipal income diversity |
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F. DE-EMPHASIZE PARKING. Standard parking requirements drive up the cost of development, forcing developers to dedicate valuable space to the car. They also contribute to the spread of impervious surfaces, and contribute to hostile pedestrian environments. Still parking will continue to be a necessary evil. Growing smarter means reducing both the amount and visibility of parking by the greater use of on-street and shared parking and by improved design of both on-street and off-street parking.

De-emphasize Parking: Scoring Criteria – 12 Points

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| 20. Minimize the parking provided
21. Provide Alternatives
22. On-Street Parking Design
23. Off-Street Parking Design |
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G. EXCELLENCE IN URBAN DESIGN (SITE AND BUILDING). Smart growth means that urban design – the scale and detail of streets and blocks in relation to the size and needs of human beings – is a key to a successful smart growth project. Good urban design provides a sense of comfort and convenience to people on their feet. It is an essential ingredient to a sense of place, providing image and beauty, evoking tradition and delight. It creates places where people want to be.

Excellence in Urban Design and Character (Site and Buildings): Scoring Criteria – 10 points
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| 24. Building Orientation
25. Local Architectural Character
26. Visually Interesting Street Front
27. Historic Preservation
28. Trees and Tree Cover |
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H. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP (SITE AND BUILDING). Growing smarter means care for the environment, investing not only in the natural surrounding beauty, but also preserving the very resources that will sustain current and all future generations. It means developing alternative energy sources that reduce the carbon footprint of a project.

Environmental Stewardship of Site and Buildings: Scoring Criteria – 10 Points
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| 29. Topography, Habitat and Natural Features
30. Wetlands and Water Quality
31. Alternative Energy Systems
32. Green building (LEED Certification) |
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For a more detailed discussion of the individual questions in the above scoring categories, and detailed instructions about how to submit a project for evaluation, please call or email Heidi Green at 1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut, at 860/523-0003 or info@1000FRIENDS-ct.org. [Revised June, 2009]